

DURATION AS A SEMANTIC CONSTITUENT OF THE CATEGORY OF ASPECTUALITY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The article considers the semantic feature of duration as the constituent of the category of aspectuality. Following types of durations are distinguished: inner duration, external determination of duration, duration irrespective to time. There is revealed the opposition of meaning of specific / non-specific duration of action of the category of aspect and situational types that express this opposition. As a result of analysis of factual material there was defined the relationship of verbs of various lexical and semantic groups to various types of duration. Data show that actualization of internal duration of physical action is not very important for the English language mentality. Action often seems like irrespective to duration, indicating intention to factual representation of actions.

Key words: category of aspectuality, inner duration, external determination of duration, duration irrespective to time, specific/non-specific duration

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of category of aspectuality has attracted linguists during much time. The problem of category aspectuality in the Russian language in the immanent aspects studied by Ju.S. Maslov [1], A.V. Bondarko [2], N.S. Avilova [3], A.K. Kiklevich [4], A. Mustajoki [5], L.K. Zhanalina [6] and others. This aspect of the English language is studied by O. Jespersen [7], B. Comrie [8], Ö. Dahl [9], H. Sweet [10], G. Radden, R. Dirven [11], L. Talmy [12], H. Verkyul [13], C. Smith [14], V. Evans, M. Green [15] and others.

Despite a rather long tradition of studying of category of aspectuality it is still one of the objects of interest of modern linguistics. Problem of aspectuality within linguistic anthropocentrism is of particular importance because this principle allows considering the category of aspectuality as a fact of grammatical thinking, organizing linguistic picture of the world. Some fragments of the description of the category of aspectuality in the Russian language picture of the world have a place in research of Ye.V. Paducheva. However, a description of semantic feature of duration in the frame of the category of aspectuality in the English language mentality has not yet been carried out.

Aspectuality determines the character of the action (in the broad sense), allows us to represent the same situation differently, to focus on the stages of the actions that the speaker wants to highlight in his statement. We cannot directly observe the aspectual nature of the event because it is the result of awareness of the situation the speaker. Way of depicting reality may be associated not only with the grammatical characteristics statements, but also with belonging to a specific semantic verb class. The choice of verb forms emphasizes the activity of the subject in the development, in action.

2. MAIN PART

Factual material of research is linguistic units of English with aspectual semantics (verbs) extracted from newspaper texts. Material of newspaper texts reveals the mental characteristics of the people, because the data represents the fragments of social life: facts, events, phenomena and personality - motivated and focused version of axiological fragments of social life. The volume is 500 units.

The concept of time, which is reflected in the language, includes the aspect of linguistic meaning of duration. Space and time is the objective form of existence of matter, which are reflected in the human mind. The concept of time is considered in this article in line with these philosophical definitions. The concept of time is expressed in the whole complex linguistic and semantic categories based on their functional-semantic field. Duration is one of the more specific categories of language, which belongs to the field of aspectuality. Each real action takes a certain period (interval) of time, i.e. is characterized by varying objective duration. However, in the language reflection of the character of the action in time there is possibility of distraction from the real extension of an action in time. There is a possibility of such a linguistic semantic interpretation of aspectual features in which an action appears regardless of its duration. The very meaning of a statement may involve significance of other aspectual features and insignificance, irrelevance of features of real duration.

As pointed out by A.V. Bondarko "duration is one of the most private language categories within the scope of aspectuality" [2, p. 98]. V.M. Vsevolodova regards duration as the labeled component of the opposition "action not marked in relation to brevity / duration" (time which is partly occupied by an action): *called, walked in the park on Wednesday / yesterday* vs. "action marked as a long" (time which is fully occupied by an action): *called, walked in the park two hours / for a long time* [16, p. 82]. Then the linguist suggests the opposition of length "objectively estimated length": *he worked for two*

days, I read the whole evening; vs. "subjectively estimated length": 1) "short": *had a rest only for a week, in three years a city was built*; vs. "duration": *rested for a whole hour, worked for years* [ibid, p. 82].

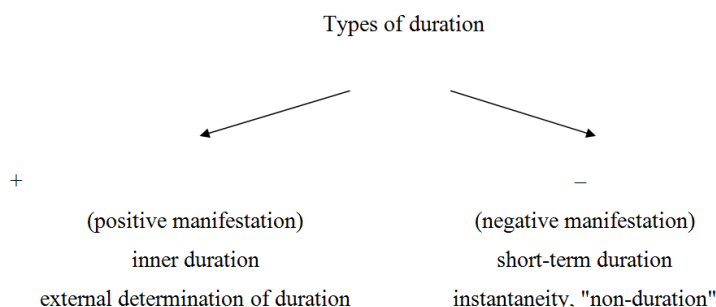
Following types of duration can be distinguished:

a) the internal duration of an action, which is caused by inherent aspectual features of this action which is encompassed in the lexical, grammatical and derivational semantics of the verb. To this type of duration refer such verbs, lexical meaning of which contains an element of time length (for example, *to wait, to sit*). To this type of duration refer also verbs of restrictive and prolonged-restrictive Aktionsarts;

b) the external determination of duration, which is characterized by the presence of indicators of duration located outside the predicate. As a mark of the duration there may be, for example, adverbial determination of duration, which is combined with an internal characteristic of action time length: *I will be working till noon*.

Inner duration is characterized by more evident aspectual nature ("internal time" of an action) as compared to external determination of duration. Means of external determination of duration also have aspectual characteristics. These means have specific lexical meaning and also contain generalized aspectual semantic features. In the Russian language adverbial modifiers such as *long, two hours, many years (wrote for a long time)* in combination with the imperfective aspect convey the meaning of a long duration, adverbial modifiers such as *in two hours, over many years (did something in two hours)* in combination with the perfective aspect convey the meaning of closed (resultant) duration and such adverbial modifiers as *for long time, for two hours, for a week, etc. (paused for a long time)* in combination with the perfective aspect convey duration of result preservation. These types of adverbial modifiers correlate with verbal aspects [2, p. 99].

As A.V. Bondarko points out there is a "positive" manifestation of length semantics discussed above (with respect to the long-term duration) and its "negative" manifestation - a short-term duration, instantaneity, "non-duration" [2, p. 100]. Types of duration are represented in Scheme 1:



Scheme 1. Types of duration

One kind of internal duration is lexical duration: meaning of duration lies in the lexical meaning of the verb. Lexical duration is expressed by the following groups of verbs: a) specifically-lasting verbs (*to last, to go on*), b) verbs containing implicit meaning of duration (*to live, to wait*). Such verbs contain in their meaning the seme of temporary extension, but are not specially-lasting. In this case, the length is only one of the elements of a particular lexical meaning of a verb. The duration of this type as opposed to the duration of verbs such as *to last* is implicit [2, p. 101].

A special kind of inner duration is due to the Aktionsart. Characteristic feature of duration is essential for long-limited (perdurative) Aktionsart as well as restrictive (delimitative) Aktionsart.

Category of aspect of English verb includes the opposition of meaning of specific / non-specific duration of action. The meaning of specific duration of action (series: duration and specificity) is transmitted through continual forms (Continuous Aspect forms) non-perfect and perfect series of three time planes (present, past, future). The meaning of non-specific duration (absence of specific duration seme) is transmitted with the help of the corresponding series of non-continuous forms (Non-Continuous Aspect Forms) [17, p. 41-42].

The main situational types of meaning of specific duration expressed by forms of non-perfect series can be reduced to two:

1. Identification of action passing in a certain point of time. Time of occurrence of action may be indicated contextually (expressed explicitly) or resulting from the speech situation (expressed implicitly). This situational meaning of Continuous Aspect is expressed in three time planes: past, present and future.

I don't want you looking at what I'm looking at on the internet, or knowing what my password is for Facebook or my bank account, or overhearing messages to friends and lovers, people I love and hate, it's none of your business [18]; *When I was singing Girl Who Got Away in the studio, Stanley was kicking so hard, it felt like he could hear it* [18].

2. Description of action flowing in a limited period of time in the past, present or future. The time period can be expressed in the implementation of this type of situational meaning by such circumstances, as *the whole day, all the time, from five till seven etc.* Period of time may be implied: it can be drawn from a particular speech situation: *My fear is how quickly it's all evolving, that's what worries me* [19].

Perfective series includes two situational types of aspect meaning of specific duration. The first type is associated with the designation of long-lasting action, flowing in a particular period and completed by the time of the final limit of this period:

"I haven't actually performed in front of other human beings for five years, so this could go either way", jokes Dido as she takes the stage for an intimate London showcase [18].

The second situational type of aspect meaning of specific duration in series of perfect forms retains a part of features peculiar to situational meaning of the first type, - designation of the action flowing in a specific period of time prior to a certain point. However, unlike the first type, the action lasting in this period does not terminate when reaching the end point of the period but continues to develop further: *She blithely dismisses any notion that she may (as the title of her new album implies) have been running away from fame, or music* [18].

Time period of flowing of such actions, both in the first and second types of situations, can be expressed explicitly by such adverbial modifiers as *for an hour*, *for ages*, *since then*, etc. or implicitly, i.e. logically follow from a particular speech situation or context. These situational meanings are conveyed by the form of Continuous Aspect in the Present and the Past Perfect tenses. Future Perfect Continuous is used rarely.

Indefinite and Continuous forms can be opposed:

1. by the proceedings of action (in its direct development) - Continuous forms, in completing an action in general - Indefinite forms. Therefore, the action indicated by the verb in the Indefinite form, can be finished and unfinished. These characteristics are due to the lexical nature of the verb. Continuous forms in this case convey incomplete action. In the following example, the action expressed by the verb *comes*, is complete, and the action expressed by the verb *damages* and *forces*, - unfinished: *The disclosure comes despite previous fears from experts that too much access to screen-based entertainment damages children's attention span and forces them to lose concentration* [20].

2. by the generalized action (abstractness or replication) and specificity of action course. *When I write songs, it's very private, I'm not really thinking anybody's going to hear them* [18]; *It's a background that might explain why, on the surface at least, she almost revels in a kind of ordinariness, putting herself across as a prettier and more soulful Bridget Jones* [18]. In this case, the generalized action in the use of Indefinite forms is conveyed as a characteristic feature of an object without time constraints. On the contrary, Continuous form conveys the verbal action in certain time, opposing the action in general: *If he's screaming in the night, I just sing it and he stops and listens* [18].

Thus, the grammatical meaning of a Continuous forms is a process in a particular flow, or action in the process at a particular stage of its course. Duration, incompleteness, specific actions, procedural actions focus on a more limited period of time. A common meaning of Indefinite forms is action in general, closed, as opposed to forms of Continuous, where it is not closed in its flow [21, p. 5-7].

The most numerous, according to our observations, is a group of verbs that express the inner length - 53%. Verbs irrelative to the time of duration are 35% of all analyzed verbs. External determination of duration was detected in an amount of 12%.

Internal length, according to the actual material, is expressed by the following grammatical means:

1. Present Indefinite. This form is mostly used to express the inner length (50%). Action expressed by the verb in the Present Indefinite, has continued relevance in the present context and thus has a certain duration. *On the surface, her music has an easy accessibility, but underneath there is often something dark and contradictory stirring* [18]. Inner duration is observed in verbs in the form of Present Indefinite, that have in its lexical semantics the seme of duration (the most commonly used were, for example, verbs denoting speech and thoughts, emotional, existential verbs, as according to their nature the verbs need time to implement the actions denoted by them. Let us see an example: the verb *sings* has in its semantics the meaning of duration, which is also underlined by the explanation: *"If only for today, I want to be, the girl who got away," she sings* [18]. The verb *feel* belongs to a group of emotional verbs and requires some time for its implementation: *On a personal level, I really feel for the guy, it's a very, very severe sentence* [19]. Link-verb *to be*, according to analyzed data, has an internal length in the description of the human features. Apparently, this is due to the fact that the inherent properties of people are relatively long and are important for the people around them for their interaction. *The University of Rochester researchers found that children who played video games were quick thinkers and had good hand-eye co-ordination* [20]; *I am sort of eternal optimist, annoyingly so* [18].

Past Indefinite form was used with verbs that cannot be used in Continuous form. These verbs do have a duration meaning in their semantics: *When I was singing Girl Who Got away in the studio, Stanley was kicking so hard, it felt like he could hear it* [18]; *He took an oath, and he broke that oath – he broke a rule he knew he was breaking* [19].

Future Indefinite form expresses, according to the actual material, the duration which will be implemented in future: *He adds that plants such as ragged robin will bloom beautifully in a pot with good compost* [22].

2. Continuous forms in present and past time planes. Future Continuous forms have not been recorded, although this possibility is not excluded. In the case of the use of Continuous forms we do not know the time limits of action, but we are aware that the action had length, we can observe the action at the time of speaking: *I'm not saying they are right, I'm just saying I can see their perspective* [19]; *He took an oath, and he broke that oath – he broke a rule he knew he was breaking* [19].

3. Perfect Continuous forms. These forms express duration: they indicate that the action commenced before the speaking and either continues after the moment of implementation of the action or terminates at the time of speaking. For example, in the following sentence action took place before the speech and goes on, i.e. has an inner length: *She blithely dismisses any notion that she may (as the title of her new album implies) have been running away from fame, from music* [18].

4. Verbs in the infinitive form. In their semantic these verbs have duration. Basically, there presented verbs of the following lexical-semantic groups: verbs denoting speech and thought, emotional verbs, verbs of physical impact. Infinitive as it is known to expresses an action in a generalized form. In the next sentence pronounced generalized action having an internal length that also emphasizes context means: *My idea of relaxing is to sing and play, even if half the time it's nursery rhymes* [18].

5. Construction with modal verbs. According to the factual data there were recorded modal verbs that express physical or mental ability: *Playing computer games can dramatically boost children's exam results in basic subject, it is claimed* [20]; recommendation to the implementation of the action, advice: *I think transparency is really important, but should that transparency be transferred to our communications?* [19]. In addition, it was noted the use of modal verbs expressing necessity an action.

In English duration irrelative to time is expressed, according to the actual material, by the following language means:

1. Indefinite forms.

Present Indefinite form. Present Indefinite form can express internal duration as well as duration irrelative to time. Basically these are situations of generalized nature, where an indication of the duration does not really matter. *"If it offends, just turn it off"* [18] (*to listeners about the song*) - appeal to anyone, to any listener, regardless to time and space. In this sentence, the emotional verb *offends*, in spite of having the seme of duration in its meaning, in this case this seme as it recedes into the background. The verb *turn off* in its lexical meaning contains the seme of short-term action. This verb is in the imperative form that gives the meaning of wish, instructions for execution, thus leveling the meaning of the duration of action.

The verb *to be* can transmit meaning of duration of an action irrelative to time. Unlike internal duration that can also be expressed by the verb *to be* in relation to the person, irrelativeness to duration corresponds with inanimate objects, or there takes place any abstract relationship. The following example illustrates this point: *But his superiors might have been right to say it's not your position to be worried about it within the hierarchy of the military organization, which is why he had to be sentenced* [19]. Let's consider the following example: *Otherwise, it would be "it's a lovely day, and I love you", and I'm not interested in that kind of song, because life's not like that* [18]. In the part of the statement *it's a lovely day* the verb *is* is irrelevant to duration, here generalized assumption is expressed. In the next part of the statement *I'm not interested in that kind of song* the verb *am* expresses inner duration, since the speaker emphasizes the relevance of his musical preferences at the time of speaking. Also the internal duration is expressed in the last part of the statement *because life's not like that*, because it is told here not about life in general, well-known truths, but certain characteristics, properties are given which, in the opinion of the speaker, are meaningful and relevant. In the following example, the verb *to be*, though having a person as a subject, does not express the inner duration but correlates with duration irrelative to time, as the speaker himself/herself shifts the emphasis: *I'm not saying they are right, I'm just saying I can see their perspective* [19].

In the next sentence the verb *is* does not have the meaning of duration, as in this case the attitude of the speaker to the referred situation is important: *Do I think that's likely to happen? Sadly no* [19].

Past Indefinite Form. This form is most commonly used to express action, irrespective to duration. The fact of produced action in the past is important; its duration does not really matter for the speaker. Verbs of different semantic (e.g., verbs of physical effects, motion verbs, verbs denoting speech and thought) groups can express such actions. Exceptions are emotional verbs, existential verbs and verbs denoting relationship, because they contain in their lexical meaning the sense of duration, i.e. require a certain period of time to implement the action: *She actually wrote and recorded her new album prior to giving birth to their first son, Stanley, in December 2011, but decided to put it on hold and enjoy motherhood* [18]; *She relocated to Los Angeles at the height of her fame, but returned after two years because: "I do like my friends and family"* [18].

There was not registered a single case of the use of verbs in the form of Future Indefinite, expressing action irrespective to duration. Apparently, this is due to the fact that in this case an action requires some time for implementation.

2. Perfect forms - mainly in the present and past tense planes. Occurrences in the Future tense were not recorded, although this possibility is not excluded. Using Perfect forms, speaker does not focus on the duration but on the effectiveness of action: *His note has been posted under the article, and says: "Do I think [Chelsea] Manning should be pardoned? Yes"* [19]; *On 15 September, the actor Benedict Cumberbatch wrote to the Guardian to say he felt his views had been misrepresented in an interview by Decca Aitkenhead published in Weekend magazine* [19].

3. constructions with modal verbs. Most occurrences account for modal verbs that express the physical or mental ability: *If they are saving lives, how can you say that is less important than civil liberties?* [19]

4. verbs in the form of infinitive: *In one penalty shoot-out game, students answer questions before being allowed to use their computer mouse to score goals* [20].

External determination of duration is expressed, according to the actual material, by the following means:

1. using prepositions of time: *So when Dido says she hasn't sung in front of another human being in five years, she is not counting immediate family.* [18];

2. using adverbs of time. Cases of the use of adverbs of time are few: *Personally, I have never found Dido dull* [18].

3. non-prepositional adverbial modifiers of the time. In this case, there may act words denoting the time period as well as words expressing abstract concepts that correlate with the concept of time interval: *The 58-year-old Fox will have surgery in a few days and will miss several weeks while recuperating* [23]; *They were soon informed that he was in stable condition, but the rattled team unraveled in the second half as Indianapolis rallied for a 27-24 victory Sunday night* [23].

4. using conjunctions, introducing adverbial subordinate clause: *Smith spent 10 years with Kubiak while the coach was offensive coordinator of the Broncos* [23].

Functioning of nouns denoting time units may serve as a means of speech expression: *"It makes me laugh, because they are two of my favourites of all time"* [18].

As the actual material shows, native English speakers often use indicators of specific time duration of action (*in five years, for today, through 2014*) than non-specific (*for years, night after night, of all time*). Adverbs of time are used rarely: *long, never, any longer*. At the same time, complex sentences with subordinate clauses of time are often used in which simultaneous implementation of action against the background of the other is observed.

Let's consider the distribution of lexical-semantic groups of verbs by types of expressed duration in the English language.

Let's consider the verbs with the semantics of the internal duration.

Verbs denoting speech and thought, according to the analyzed material, have the highest prevalence of verbs expressing inner duration - 31%: *My fear is meeting fire with fire, and I think that's what we're moving towards too quickly and we need to debate it* [19]. Verbs denoting speech and thought irrespective to duration were rarely recorded. It is important for speaker to emphasize inner duration of performed action.

The verb *to be* has high prevalence in this group (24%). The speaker emphasizes the importance of the described condition, its duration: *There's been so much else going on in my life* [18].

Verbs of physical action make up 11% of the total number of verbs possessing the meaning of internal duration. The percentage of distribution is not very large. For the English language mental representation of the action as a fact, without the emphasis on internal development steps is inherent: *If they are saving lives, how can you say that is less important than civil liberties?* [19]; *Corrects answers in another game – based on space invaders - give pupils more time to fire at aliens* [20].

Emotional verbs account for 11% of the number of verbs having the meaning of internal duration. It is important for the speaker to emphasize the length of the test of experience: *But I do feel things strongly, often on behalf of other people* [18]. Among the group of the verbs irrelevant to time emotional verbs almost does not occur.

Stative verbs account for about 9% of all verbs relevant internal duration. In the following example, the reinforcement particle *does* emphasizes the importance of the internal duration: *Time does seem to sort of slip away* [18].

Verbs of motion were recorded in the amount of 5%: *She blithely dismisses any notion that she may (as the title of her new album implies) have been running away from fame, or music* [18].

In the same amount (5%) a group of verbs denoting state change is represented: *My fear is how quickly it's all evolving, that's what worries me* [19].

Verbs of perception do not constitute a large group, mostly representing the internal duration: *I see the world in songs* [18].

Verbs expressing action irrespective to duration were identified in the following cases.

The verb *to be*, expressing action irrespective to duration, receives the highest prevalence (31%). It is used in generalizing statements: *On a personal level, I really feel for the guy, it's a very, very severe sentence* [19].

The amount of verbs of physical action irrespective to duration is 27%. The fact of the implementation of action is emphasized: *Thank You became a global hit after Eminem sampled it for Stan, but the tensions in the melody and lyric were already present* [18].

Verbs of speech and thought, irrespective to duration, are widely spread in English (19%): *I'm only saying what everyone in your paper has already said* [19].

Verbs of movement, irrespective to duration, were observed in the amount of 5%: *"If only for today, I want to be, the girl who got away", she sings* [18].

Verbs of state change have the same volume of distribution as verbs of motion (5%): *I got married, then I got pregnant and wanted to hang out with my family, a lot of amazing stuff* [18].

3. CONCLUSIONS

The rest lexical-semantic groups of verbs are presented non-significantly.

Thus, there were revealed ways of expressing types of duration in English. According to the analysis of factual material, the inner duration of the English language is expressed by Present Indefinite, Past Indefinite (with verbs that are not used in Continuous form), Future Indefinite, Perfect Continuous forms, infinitive constructions with modal verbs. Duration irrespective to time is expressed by the Present Indefinite, Past Indefinite, Perfect forms, constructions with modal verbs, verbs in the infinitive form. External determination of the duration of the English language is expressed using prepositions of time, adverbs of time, non-prepositional adverbial modifier, with the help of conjunctions, introducing adverbial subordinate clause. As shown by the actual material, English speakers more often use indicators of a specific time duration of action (*in five years, for today, through 2014*) than non-specific (*for years, night after night, of all time*). Adverbs of time are rarely used (*long, never, any longer*). At the same time, there is observed a frequent use of complex sentences with subordinate clauses with adverbial modifiers of time in which there is the simultaneous implementation of action against the background of the other. In the English language the group of verbs of physical action is not leading among other lexical-semantic groups of verbs. According to the distribution this group follows the verb *to be*, and the group of speech and thought verbs, both in relation to the inner duration and duration irrelevant to time. Verbs of physical action irrelevant to time significantly dominate (27%) over the verbs of physical action having the meaning of internal duration (11%). Actualization of internal duration of physical action is not very important for the English language mentality. Action often seems like irrespective to duration, indicating intention to factual representation of actions.

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